



Peter Fritzsche

Loving War Speaker Series

Peter Fritzsche
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



"Knights of the Air "

Wednesday, May 11, 2005
12:00 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Avenue
Room 120



Starting with World War I, individual warriors found a new arena: the air. The "Red Baron" von Richthofen, for example, meticulously noted in his *Diary* the details of each "kill", how he aimed at his adversary's fuel tanks to make sure he went down in flames, and how he sometimes landed beside the wreck to make sure it – and its pilot – would never fly again. The blatant joy in killing other human beings shines out from every page. Why?

Dr. Peter Fritzsche specializes in modern German and European history and is a former Guggenheim and Humboldt Fellow. Professor Fritzsche's current research focuses on comparative questions of memory and identity and vernacular uses of the past in modern Europe. His most recent book is *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (2004); his other publications include *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (1990); *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (1992); *Reading Berlin 1900* (1996); and *Germans into Nazis* (1998). With Charles C. Stewart, he edited *Imagining the Twentieth Century* (1997). Peter Fritzsche received his doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1986.

This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of "*Loving War*," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).

About the Series:

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?
- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or

"modernity"?

- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing?

Upcoming Events :

April 6, 2005: [Nicola DiCosmo](#)
April 13, 2005: [Karl Friday](#)
April 20, 2005: [Thomas Kuehne](#)
April 27, 2005: [Robert H. Pape](#)
May 4: [Eliot Cohen](#)
May 11: Peter A. Fritzsche
May 18, 2005: [Barry Strauss](#)
May 25, 2005: [N.A.M. Rodger](#)